



June 9, 2021

Dear Members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee:

On behalf of our more than 1.6 million members and supporters nationwide, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) supports H.R. 3684, the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America Act (INVEST in America Act), particularly the provisions that pertain to national parks investments. If enacted, this bill would provide critical funding to repair roads, bridges and park transit systems to ensure millions of visitors can continue to experience and enjoy national parks. We also support the bill's significant steps to reducing carbon pollution, advancing mitigation and resiliency measures that help our infrastructure adapt to our changing climate, and addressing the growing conflict between vehicles and wildlife.

For more than a century, our national parks have remained America's favorite places, important pieces of our natural, historical and cultural heritage set aside for future generations to explore and enjoy. But as visitors enjoy our parks, they find the facilities in the parks have become worn and inadequate to meet increasing demand and climate threats. The National Park Service depends on dedicated funding through the Highway Trust Fund to improve park transportation assets to ensure park visitors continue to enjoy our parks and that the park resources are protected.

In particular, NPCA supports funding increases to the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP), Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), and Federal Lands and Tribal Major Projects Program (FLTMP), formerly named the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program. These programs provide necessary funding to help address the billions of dollars of transportation maintenance needs, such as paved roads, parking lots, tunnels, bridges, and transit systems throughout and providing access to the national parks. We encourage the committee to ensure that a portion of those funds support transit infrastructure to reduce pollution, address congestion in and around our parks and provide access for visitors. For example, funding is needed to install a circulator shuttle and bike paths to better integrate Pullman National Monument within the historic neighborhood and provide better access to visitors and local residents.

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NPCA greatly appreciates the wildlife-related provisions added throughout the bill. It includes a \$400 million wildlife crossing grant program, provisions for updated research and technical training opportunities, and the inclusion of wildlife-vehicle collision reduction as a qualified project in existing grant and funding streams. The Federal Highway Administration estimates 1-2 million wildlife-vehicle collisions occur annually and the associated costs to motorists is estimated to be \$8.3 billion yearly in medical costs and vehicle damage. The provisions in this bill will help reduce collisions and the associated costs to humans and wildlife.

NPCA is also very supportive of provisions that focus on reducing climate pollution and support climate vulnerability assessments and resiliency improvements both in existing and new transportation infrastructure investments. This includes provisions that incorporate natural infrastructure in surface transportation design both inside and outside our national parks. Also, notable is support for efforts to plan for and provide financial resources to better design or locate transportation assets that are susceptible to extreme weather events as a result of climate change.

Additionally, we are encouraged by the provisions and funding to expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure throughout the country and NPCA encourages the siting of some of these charging locations in and around our national parks. However, we are disappointed the bill does not include support for replacing the federal fleet (cars, trucks, buses, shuttles), including vehicles used by the National Park Service, with zero-emission vehicles. National parks are at the forefront of the climate crisis and should be part of the solution to tackling it.

We also support provisions that direct the Transportation Research Board (TRB) to study both stormwater runoff practices and climate resilient transportation infrastructure. Runoff from roads can degrade the quality of water in and near parks. The problem is exacerbated by heavier rains and increased storms. We hope the TRB studies can help address the runoff problem by prioritizing natural infrastructure that absorbs flood waters, filters pollutants, creates habitat and provides safe drinking water for visitors to parks and nearby towns.



Finally, we applaud the committee for preserving the protections and public involvement through the National Environmental Policy Act. People deserve to have a say in federal projects that impact the health, economy and environment for their communities.

Fixing our national park infrastructure is a good economic investment for our country. National parks are an important part of the tourism economy and extremely popular with Americans. National parks received more than 328 million visits in 2019 that generated almost \$42 billion for the U.S. economy. For every dollar Congress invests in the National Park Service, \$10 is returned to the American economy, with much of that money directly benefiting parks' gateway communities. With national parks supporting more than 340,000 private-sector jobs annually, these economic engines are worthy of a robust infrastructure investment in 2021 and beyond.

Overall, the INVEST in America Act charts a strong path forward for surface transportation in our nation's parks and provides solutions to addressing our changing climate.

Select Positions on Offered Amendments as of 9 am Eastern 6/9/21:

NPCA **supports** the Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to the INVEST in America Act.

Westerman 019: NPCA **opposes** unregulated off-road vehicle use in the National Park System. Congress established the National Park Service to protect this nation's most extraordinary natural places. The 1916 Park Service Organic Act broadly requires that NPS "conserve the scenery, natural and historic objects, and wild life in the System units." 54 U.S.C. § 100101(a). In addition to this conservation mandate, NPS must "provide for the enjoyment of the scenery, natural and historic objects, and wild life in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Off-road vehicles pose unique threats to our national parks and can cause irreparably damage to the resources—soils, vegetation, cultural sites and wildlife habitat—that national parks and monuments were established by law to protect. NPCA wants everyone to enjoy the wonders of our national parks and other public lands, but there are other ways to enjoy them while not threatening the resources.

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Westerman 023: NPCA **opposes** reducing the Federal Lands Transportation Program funding for national parks. While we support other federal agencies receiving additional Federal Land Transportation Program funds to address their transportation infrastructure needs, NPCA does not support reducing the funding levels for the National Park Service to do so. The national parks received one half of one percent of the entire funding package in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, but the demand is much more than that. In the National Park Service's National Long-Range Transportation Plan, the agency estimates the funding necessary to address all transportation needs throughout the service is \$1.5 billion a year over a period of 6 to 10 years.

Brown 045: NPCA **supports** the authorization of funds for the National Park Service to address infrastructure needs in high-commuter corridors. The National Park Service manages several high-commuter roads including the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Additional investments are necessary to address the deterioration of these parkways that help commuters enter and exit our nation's capital and other major cities.

Burchett 080, Burchett 081, Burchett 082, Burchett 082, Stauber 033, Perry 101: NPCA **opposes** any amendment that imposes hurdles on the US DOT and other entities to install electric vehicle charging stations throughout our country. In addition to greenhouse gas emissions from federal agency activities, park visitor vehicles are by far the greatest emitters of greenhouse gases within park boundaries. Emissions from fossil fuel-consuming vehicles also harm visitors and NPS staff, mar scenic vistas and damage natural and cultural resources. Therefore, NPCA supports efforts to reduce the harmful impacts of greenhouse emissions and to install electric vehicle charging stations in national parks and throughout the country to reduce climate and other pollutants at their source.

Graves 107: NPCA **opposes** limiting the ability of states and Tribes to protect the quality of their waters under Sec. 401 of the Clean Water Act. Narrowing the ability to protect waterways and enforce safe water quality standards could risk the waters that flow in and around parks, undermining the resources parks are set aside to protect and surrounding communities rely on.



Davis 025 and Westerman 021: NPCA **opposes** these amendments that critically undermine the National Environmental Policy Act's ability to ensure that federal projects do not unnecessarily harm the environment, public health or project-adjacent communities.

Brownley 030: NPCA **supports** the establishment of a Climate Safe Working Group in the U.S. Global Change Research Program. The U.S. Global Change Research Program is a federal program mandated by Congress to coordinate federal research and investments to understand what impacts the global environment and the impacts of those changes, both human and natural. This amendment would help the program focus resources to understand the specific impacts of climate change as it relates to infrastructure development and operation.

Sincerely,

Christina Hazard
Legislative Director